

The background of the page features a dark blue silhouette of the Statue of Liberty on the left side, extending from the top to the bottom. The rest of the background is a solid dark blue color with some subtle, lighter blue curved shapes that suggest a horizon or a stylized landscape.

# STRATEGIC GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN THE SECURITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

## OBJECTIVE 1.1: ENHANCE THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES BY ENSURING THAT IMMIGRATION BENEFITS ARE GRANTED ONLY TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND PETITIONERS

USCIS was created with the dual mandate of securing the integrity of our national immigration system and supporting our proud tradition as a nation of immigrants. It is a delicate balance of compassion and precaution, reflecting our commitment to the American people and to those who wish to live among us and join in the liberties and freedoms afforded to every United States citizen.



USCIS conducted approximately 35 million background and national security checks on persons seeking immigration benefits last year. The background checks we employ were responsible for the apprehension of more than 1,200 criminals and wanted felons across the country, as well as the discovery of several dangerous fugitives.

To enhance this screening process, a new policy was developed for vetting and adjudicating cases with national security concerns. This initiative provides a coordinated, comprehensive process for identifying, tracking, and adjudicating applications and petitions with national security issues.

USCIS also developed a standard procedure to process biometric data for Iraqi nationals and certain non-Iraqi applicants seeking refugee or asylum status, through additional U.S. Government databases, thereby enhancing the security of these humanitarian programs.

In addition, the creation of the USCIS Command Center provides a continuously operating immigration information hub with full connectivity to unclassified and classified systems and instantaneous communication with USCIS leadership, DHS component offices and law enforcement and intelligence community partners.

## OBJECTIVE 1.2: DETER, DETECT, AND PURSUE

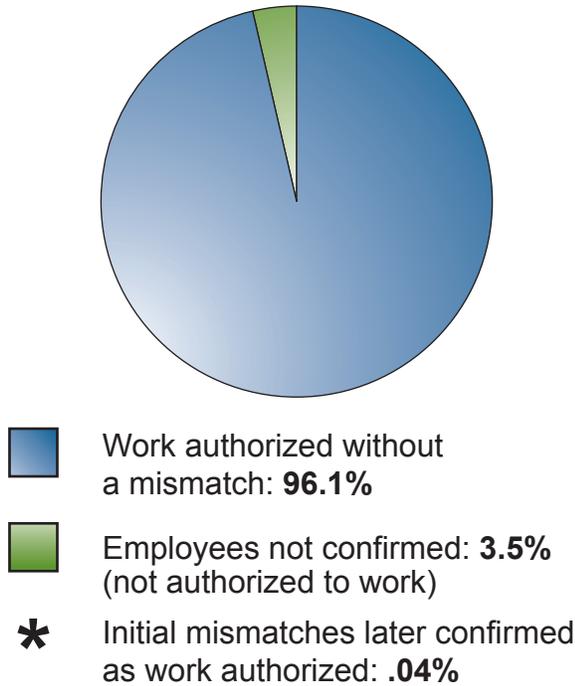
### IMMIGRATION-RELATED FRAUD

USCIS anti-fraud efforts will make it easier for our agency to securely and efficiently process immigration applications, easier for employers to comply with labor and immigration law and harder for those seeking to exploit our systems.

The E-Verify program grew from 24,463 participants at the end of FY 2007 to 88,116 at the end of FY 2008, with an average of 1,000 employers signing up each week. In addition, the number of queries processed through the E-Verify program doubled from



## FY08 E-Verify Authorization Rates



3.27 million at the end of FY 2007 to 6.6 million at the end of FY 2008.

To keep up with the growing demand for the program, USCIS instituted monitoring and compliance procedures within E-Verify, aimed towards safeguarding personal information and referring instances of fraud, discrimination, and illegal or unauthorized use of the system to enforcement authorities. A third-party study found that between April and June 2008, approximately 96.1 percent of all cases queried through E-Verify were found to be employment authorized instantly or within twenty-four hours.

To combat other instances of employment related immigration fraud, USCIS issued the H-1B (employment of temporary foreign workers in specialty occupations) Benefit Fraud and Compliance Assessment (BFCA). The H-1B BFCA identified fraud and/or technical violations in 21.7 percent of sampled H-1B petitions. Based on an analysis of types of fraud and violations found, guidance that addressed the fraud was prepared for field officers.

Based partly on findings of the H-1B BFCA as well as an earlier Religious Worker BFCA, FDNS developed an Administrative Site Visit and Verification Program (ASVVP). The ASVVP, expected to be operational in FY 2009, will depend on contract personnel to conduct low-level site visits. Implementation of this program will lessen the burden on Immigration Officers to conduct all site visits, thus freeing them to concentrate on more complex cases.

## OBJECTIVE 1.3: IDENTIFY AND SHARE

### IMMIGRATION-RELATED INFORMATION WITH PARTNERS

USCIS is an active partner in federal, state and local law enforcement efforts to apprehend and detain known criminals and others who fraudulently attempt to gain immigration benefits. We have a responsibility to the American people to protect our Nation and maintain the integrity of our national immigration system USCIS personnel work diligently to both keep our doors open and closely guarded.

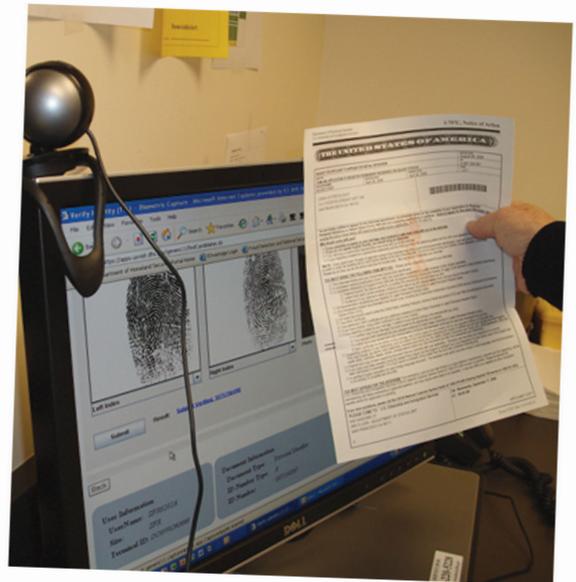
The joint USCIS and FBI National Name Check Program (NNCP) substantially reduced all pending name check cases. The NNCP met the milestone of eliminating name checks pending more than three, two and one years, and is on track to eliminate those pending more than six months by early 2009.

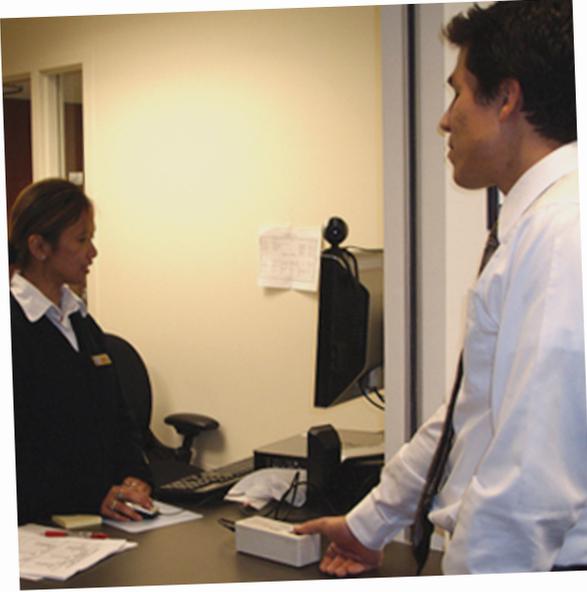
In the past year, USCIS has seen the total count of requests pending at the NNCP decline from a high of 350,000 in November 2007 to less than 8,700 in early FY 2009. Name check requests pending longer than 33 months fell from 32,000 in August 2007, to only 107 over the same time period. The FBI Name Check Backlog, defined as requests pending longer than six months, has effectively been eliminated.

The USCIS National Records Center (NRC) retrieved, verified, and retired over 1.2 million Alien Files in FY 2008. Over 230,000 files were entered into the National File Tracking System and the Central Index System. This structure protects data integrity and ensures accurate information is available for benefit and law enforcement programs associated with USCIS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Customs and Border Protection.

As USCIS anti-fraud and national security efforts have matured, intelligence and enforcement communities have recognized the value of having USCIS subject matter experts available for advice, information, and coordination. In order to improve information sharing and mutual education opportunities, USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) officers are embedded at the Department of State's Kentucky Consular Center, FBI, ICE, INTERPOL, the National Joint Terrorism Task Force, El Paso Intelligence Center and the National Targeting Center. USCIS also implemented a field intelligence program to improve communication between USCIS field offices and local investigatory and enforcement entities.

In order to provide useful information to those entities with the need to know, USCIS developed a Field Intelligence Program. Expected to be implemented in FY 2009, this program will deploy collateral duty and full time USCIS intelligence officers to field offices to facilitate the sharing of immigration information.





## **OBJECTIVE 1.4: INTEGRATE SECURITY PRECEPTS WITH IMMIGRATION ADJUDICATION PROCESSES**

As the gatekeepers of our national immigration system, we serve on the front lines of homeland security. We take this responsibility seriously. USCIS is continuously adapting security processes ahead of potential threats to the integrity of our immigration system.

USCIS established an automated, computer-based Person Centric-Query (PCQ) Service. The PCQ represents a new automated ap-

proach of submitting a single query across a number of intra-agency systems and returning a consolidated view of an immigrants' journey through the U.S. immigration system. The USCIS PCQ Service was nominated to the 2008 President's Quality Award Program for excellence in Expanded Electronic Government.

USCIS quality assurance analysts audited the administration of Naturalization Quality Procedures (NQP) and conducted Naturalization Decisional Quality Reviews to ensure full compliance with USCIS policies and procedures by field office personnel in light of the significant increase in applications being processed under the surge elimination plan. The results of the NQP audit, monitored quarterly throughout the year, indicated that USCIS officers maintained accuracy rates in excess of 99% for Naturalization applications.

USCIS worked closely with the Department of State to launch a DNA pilot program in East Africa to empirically assess the extent of relationship fraud found in the Priority 3 (family reunification) refugee program. During a one week period, approximately 500 refugee applicants in East Africa were asked to submit to DNA testing; the results were significant – only 13% of relationships were confirmed to be valid.

The remaining applicants refused to participate in testing, failed to appear for subsequent processing or had one family member in which the claimed relationship was not supported by DNA testing. Given the significant levels of fraud identified, the pilot program was expanded to other locations and acceptance of new P-3 cases suspended until an official application form incorporating a formal DNA testing regime for P-3 cases is developed in the future.